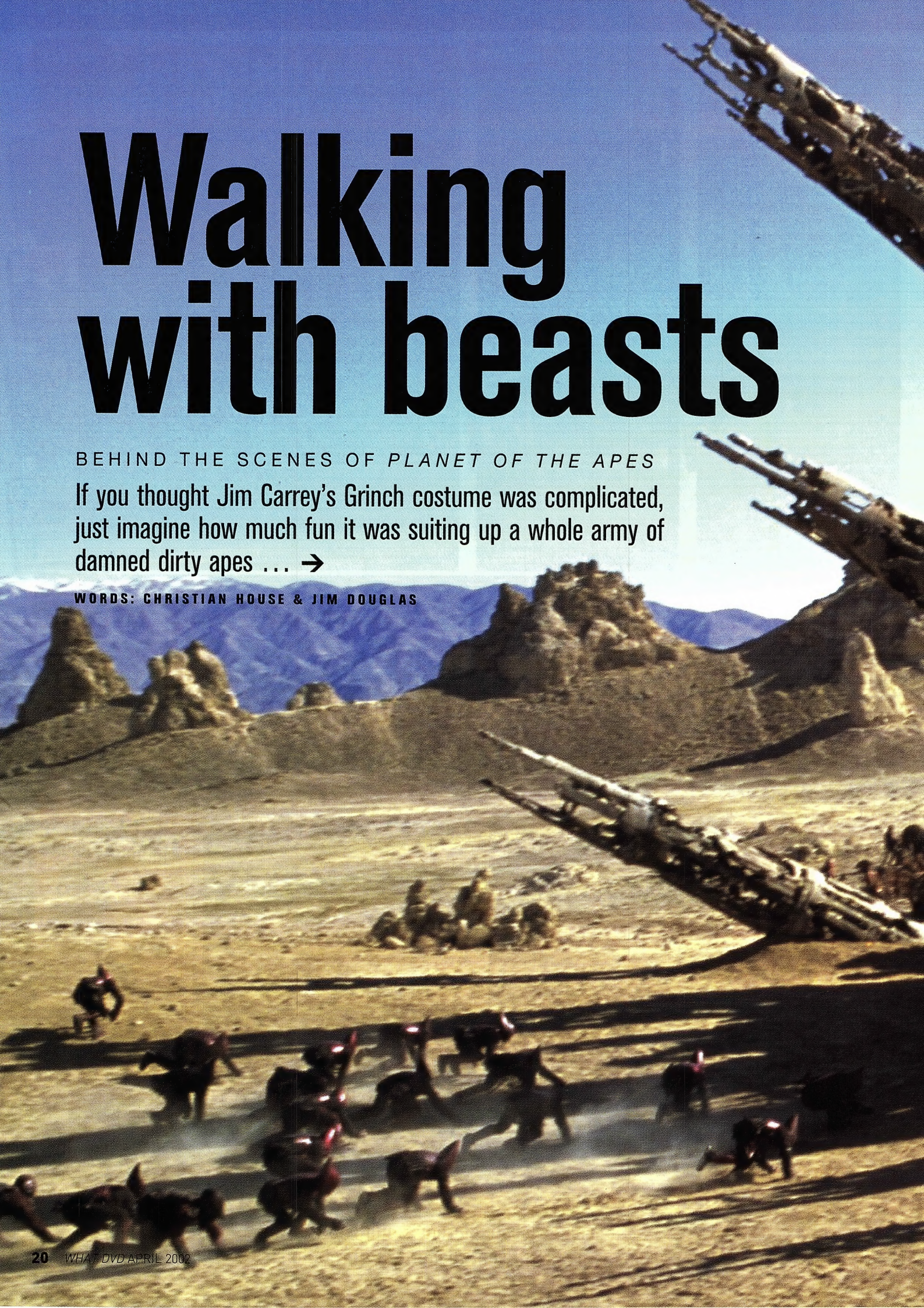


# Walking with beasts

BEHIND THE SCENES OF *PLANET OF THE APES*

If you thought Jim Carrey's Grinch costume was complicated, just imagine how much fun it was suiting up a whole army of damned dirty apes ... →

WORDS: CHRISTIAN HOUSE & JIM DOUGLAS











## TIM BURTON: DIRECTOR

He's directed movies about a batman, a dead man, a man dressing as a woman. Then Tim Burton went ape ...

**What DVD:** Why did you want to do this movie?

Burton: I was 10 years old when I saw *Planet of the Apes* and it had a huge impact on me, I loved it. Ten was a good time to see that movie and, in some respects, made me not want to do it because it's like, you do not remake a classic. But the studio wasn't interested in a remake and I wouldn't have done a remake because it's like a time capsule too. You can't recreate Charlton Heston, you can't recreate the issues the way they were at that time. So I started thinking about it. That's what I liked about the material, and there's something weirdly classic too about humans portraying apes. I mean, I've dealt with a lot of make-ups and things, but the image of humans as apes was powerful. It just sort of puts an image to the unanswerable questions.

**What DVD:** What was the best part of the experience for you?

Burton: The actual making of it. The actors, the crew, the people. That's when you're kind of in your cocoon of making something.

**What DVD:** You must feel a lot of pressure on such a big movie.

Burton: Yeah. I mean the mistake on this is that you can only do a certain amount of work until you get a green light. After that you're just spinning your wheels and it's just a waste of time and money. And that I think was the biggest problem. Because you feel beaten, bloodied, left for dead and now you've got to go and make the movie. I'm not a businessman, but I've never understood the dynamic of just beating the shit out of somebody and then saying "now go and make a great movie".

**What DVD:** What difference did it make working with a producer of Richard Zanuck's experience?

Burton: I loved him! He saved my life! I mean that. I just have to look at him and I start to get my mind blown. I start to hallucinate. I mean, here's this guy, who's been through all he's been through. And he's still passionate, caring, smart and that gave me hope - you know what I'm saying? He has my respect.

**What DVD:** How happy was Charlton Heston about saying the lines about guns representing the height of man's cruelty?

Burton: See, that's the thing I think is ultimately cool about him. He's misunderstood. He's multi-layered like everyone else. I think he's making the point that he's not just this one thing; I mean he was out there in the civil rights movement. Everybody has got lots more going on than we like to give them credit for. Whether you agree with someone's politics - fine; I don't, but I'd prefer someone like him who just comes out with it. I'm much more afraid of people who are like hiding in the shadows.

**What DVD:** Do you feel DVD is changing how people view films?

Burton: Well, I think it's good basically except for one aspect, which I am now no longer going to do: commentaries. Because I'm terrible at it and the reason I'm terrible at it is there's something wrong, personally, for me with it. I grew up on movies and I liked to be surprised and not know everything, and it's still a magical medium. There's an aspect to it where you shouldn't know everything. It's like dissecting the corpse.

**What DVD:** Analysing the joke?

Burton: Yeah, I mean, leave it as what it's meant to be. That isn't to say when I saw a Ray Harryhausen movie I didn't want to learn how they did it. But that shouldn't be forced on you up front. I mean, I like trailers, I like extras. There are fun things about it. I wouldn't mind seeing a movie sans dialogue and just with the music track. Those kinds of things can be cool.

**What DVD:** Now you've had some time away from *Apes*, what would you have changed?

Burton: In general, I'm of the mind that you know, it is what it is. Like when they re-did *Star Wars*. I was very disturbed by that. Just leave it.

**What DVD:** What animal are you?

Burton: A dog. I was born in the year of the dog and people have told me I have dog like tendencies.

Jim Douglas



An actor's life can be a peculiar one. Take Michael Clarke Duncan. The son of a single mother, he drags himself out of the run-down South Side of Chicago to attend community college. Supporting himself by digging ditches for the People's Gas Company he then ups sticks and heads for the Hollywood Hills. And after forcing his way onto director's and casting agent's agendas through roles in *The Green Mile* and *Bulworth*, he gets a major part in a blockbuster. As a gorilla.

Now that ain't *Hamlet*. But it is fun. "You know what? My job is like playing all day," says Duncan - aka Captain Attar, General Thade's second-in-command in Tim Burton's take on *Planet of the Apes*. "It's just like being a big kid. To play a part like this big silverback gorilla is great. I was looking at some of the clips the other day and I couldn't believe it. The way we have put this thing together is fantastic."

Playing Attar involved the type of method acting that would put Robert De Niro to shame. Even considering the strict regime

of make-up, behavioural tutoring and suiting-up in an ape outfit, Duncan still relished the opportunity. Burton told Duncan the process of turning him into Attar would be "very extensive, taking three or four hours" every day. "I was cool with that," says the actor, "because I know that's what it takes to do a good movie."

## JOINING THE FANG CLUB

To tackle the facial transformations Burton recruited the services of one of cinema's greatest make-up artists: Rick Baker. "I felt a lot of pressure taking this job," he says, "because [the original] *Planet of the Apes* inspired more people to become make-up artists than any other movie." The six-time Oscar

winner, and veteran of such films as *Men in Black*, *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Nutty Professor*, Baker had the job of making monkeys out of Duncan, Helena Bonham Carter, Paul Giamatti and Tim Roth.

After creating casts of the actors' heads and teeth Baker made a selection of personalised orang-utan, chimp and gorilla faces using latex prosthetics, scalp hairpieces and facial hair additions. "Every square inch of the appliance is carefully glued to the actor's face, so that when they move their face it translates through the rubber," explains Baker. The first moulds were the



"Yes, that's right, an opposable thumb. So... do you feel lucky, punk?"





worst part for Duncan: "They put on this goo and covered everything – eyes, nose and mouth. You really think at that point you are going to die. That you are going to suffocate. Then they pop it off." The daily make-up routine was easy by comparison. "I would shave every day to keep my face clean and smooth. They would put an astringent over my face and then they started laying on the latex. They assured me that it wouldn't leave any marks," says Duncan.

## GETTING THE SKINNY

His colleagues were less jovial about the process they had to go through. "Taking it off is actually worse than applying it," says Tim Roth. "They have to take it off very gently, piece by piece, otherwise they'll tear your skin off. That's where I lose it. I become a wimp."

Helena Bonham Carter's concerns about her character's look were more aesthetic. Burton's intention was for an anthropomorphised and highly evolved version of ape-kind. So just how feminine should she appear? Playing Ari meant being a strange kind of monkey love interest for Mark Wahlberg's Leo. A fine line had to be trodden between Carter's womanly features and a sense of simian reality.

"It's interesting to think about what is attractive. Apparently some people find me bizarrely attractive as a chimp," laughs Carter, who went through 10 weeks of tests to perfect her character's look.

"The first time it's a real shock. I look like a burn victim or somebody



Michael Clarke Duncan ... apparently.

who's pre-aged." Yet Ari is definitely on the babe end of the monkey line-up. "Her ears are not too big and everything's softened," states Baker. But she's still an ape, right? "Earlier I humanised her more," says Baker, "but it just looked ugly in a way. Too human would look like a freak."

## YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

After the daily grind of latexing-up, often in the early hours, slotting in the primate teeth caused a mixture of frustration and amusement. "They were great!" enthuses Duncan. "Actually, a lot of the females like me with the teeth in. You get some crazy women out there..."

According to Baker, the "customised fangs" act "like a huge pair of dentures" that jut the muzzle out as far as possible. This makes talking extremely awkward. "They gave us practice teeth to learn how to speak, because it's hard to make sounds like 'P' and 'V' and 'F'. It's

apparently.

"And then you creep up and steal the humans' luggage, see?"

# ANIMAL MAKE-UP

Not all hair styles are simple and easy to control, as the actors in these movies found out the hard way ...

## AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (1981)

"Remember, stay on the road and beware the full moon, boys," goes the legend. What they should of said was "beware Rick Baker," as one of *Mr Planet of the Apes*' earlier jobs was to laboriously turn David Naughton from Yank backpacker into desperate, hirsute, fanged dog.

## AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS (1997)

Tom Everett Scott is the unlucky American with sprouting doggy digits in this Gallic mess; Julie Delpy is a sorry alternative to London's nurse sexpot Jenny Agutter. But nothing can shock us like that first full-moon transformation.

## ISLAND OF DR MOREAU (1996)

Just about the only decent features to this lame genetic castaway nightmare are Dr Moreau's superb and scary human/animal hybrids. Though they're nothing compared with the horrific sight of bloated über-actor Marlon Brando as the Doctor...

## MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1998)

A bit of ding-dong with King Kong as lucky old Mighty Joe Young wrestles with Charlize Theron. Most of us would happily sweat it out in a monkey suit for that pleasure. It's *Gorillas in the Mist* meets *California Man*.

## PLANET OF THE APES (1967)

The original apes from space are given the look to suit the decade of free love. It may have little standing in the authenticity stakes, but there's plenty of swinging '60s hairiness. And that's just Charlton Heston...







## ESTELLA WARREN: STARLET

While her role as Daena in *Apes* requires little more than running around in a rag dress and gazing at Mark Wahlberg, the Canadian ex-synchronized swimming champ is on the way to stardom.

**What DVD:** How did you get involved in the film?

Warren: I was supposed to sign on to a different movie when the call came, and I went to see the casting director and the next day she said "Do you want to meet Tim Burton?" So, I went and met Tim and we spoke about my athletic background. They gave me the part and I was ecstatic.

**What DVD:** How did the switch from modeling come about?

Warren: I got a job to do commercials for Chanel No. 5. Luc Besson shot those and when I worked with him I realised that I wanted to become an actress. So I went back to New York and decided to save up enough money from modeling so that when I went to LA to become an actress I could choose roles that I wanted to do. Then I finally went and found agents and managers and within the first two weeks I got three movies.

**What DVD:** What was the best part of the whole *Apes* experience?

Working with Tim Burton. He's just brilliant. He's so creative and he's very sweet and down to earth and you can constantly see his mind working and looking for the best shot.

**What DVD:** You did a lot of your own stunt work.

Warren: I loved it because of being an athlete before, I think it's a real adrenaline rush to challenge yourself physically in that respect. It was really exciting for me.

**What DVD:** What was the roughest part of the shoot?

Warren: The hours were rather enduring, that was difficult. We were on such a tight schedule. But I would be there at like 3:30 in the morning and I'd still be like: "I can't wait!"

**What DVD:** There's an .. er.. interesting triangle between Leo and Ari and Daena ...

Warren: I think the love triangle is a really interesting part of the movie. Ari and Leo have this fantastic relationship that was very intellectual and she is very elegant and eloquent. But there's a relationship between Leo and Daena that was very human and very physical - just pure attraction.

**What DVD:** Daena must have been pissed off being left by Leo ...

Warren: Well, *(with heavy irony)*, um, I was pretty upset. It's always nice to have Leo around, he's a good guy, he's got these guns and stuff, so there are lots of plusses on his side.

**What DVD:** What was it like when you first saw the other actors dressed as apes?

Warren: It was incredibly surprising, very bizarre to have all these apes around you all the time, but you get more used to seeing them in costume than out of costume. I mean, we only saw them in costume unless it was a social event. It was strange; apes eating popcorn, reading newspapers and smoking cigarettes.

**What DVD:** Tim Burton has described himself as a dog kind of person. What sort of animal would you be?

Warren: A horse. I'm going to be an Arabian because they're strong, a little bit skittish, they're smart, they're enduring, they're loyal and *(fake bimbo)* they've got great hair!

**What DVD:** Do you think the apes and the humans could actually co-exist?

Warren: I don't know ... Maybe there'll be a sequel and we'll find out.

Jim Douglas





not your own lips, which also makes things difficult," explains Paul Giamatti, who plays Limbo, the sleazy orang-utan slave trader.

David Warner, who went through it all for his portrayal of the chimp, Sandar, is quick to agree: "The funniest thing was all of us sitting around talking. It's very hard not to crack up when people are trying to be serious or loving or angry and all you hear is people mumbling." Eating was also problematic, with the aped-up actors eating separately to save their messy faced blushes. "You had to eat with a mirror, they didn't want you to get food stuck in the hairs," admits Duncan.

## SUITS YOU!

With heads sorted, the ape suits came out. Duncan was surprised by their user-friendliness: "The only time it got hot was when we were working inside the studio with the lights on. But I was not reeking with sweat every day." But what about... err... ablutions? "OK, that was my first concern," he confesses. "They said that they were going to make a place for me so that going to the bathroom would be possible. But on one occasion I had my furry hands on and I couldn't get the piece of my costume that allowed me to go to the bathroom. I wasn't going to wet myself in an ape uniform. I was jumping up and down and hollering until finally someone from wardrobe came in. I just made it."

Looking the part was only half of the human-to-ape transition. The production team set up a three month long Ape School to teach the actors, extras and stunt people how to truly "go ape". The original movie had actors limited to shuffling hunched over like Igor in *Frankenstein*. But for his version of the story, Tim Burton wanted every movement, whether it be swinging, leaping, eating or fighting, to be as close to genuine ape behaviour as the actors could manage.



The school was headed by John Alexander, an ape behaviour specialist whose previous work has included stunts on *Greystoke*, *Gorillas in the Mist* and *Mighty Joe Young*.

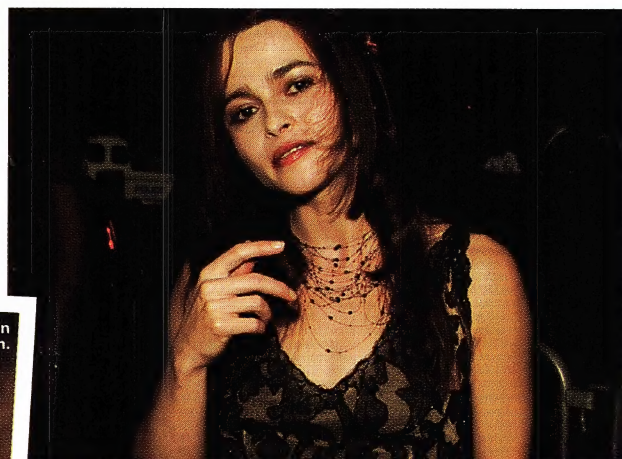
Helping with the physical demands of aping an ape were the joint talents of stunt co-ordinator Charlie Croughwell and ex-Cirque du Soleil performer Terry Notary. They didn't want the actors to appear like "people in monkey suits", so Charlie and Terry guided the cast in the subtle, liquid movement of primates.

"Apes are so direct," says Notary. "There are no human quirks or thoughts to confuse the issue." But there are idiosyncrasies to different varieties of ape, as Duncan explains: "Since I'm a silverback gorilla, my walk is different from Tim Roth's chimpanzee. His is more bow-legged." And the teachers even stayed on, continuing their lessons on the set.

## THE FUNKY GIBBONS

Real chimps were even brought in for the cast to rehearse with. They would also appear in the final film, which was to have extraordinary consequences for Duncan.

"I fell in love with one of them," the burly actor sighs, "and I guess he felt the same way about me. We were inseparable. He got mad eventually, because I wouldn't show him attention. Tim Burton told me I was ruining the scene by playing with him so much. So I had to leave him alone for a little while..."



## HELENA BONHAM CARTER: SERIOUS ACTOR

Having put her corsets-and-parasols image to rest as *Fight Club's* fruity Marla, Bonham Carter thought uncomfortable costumes were behind her for good ...

**What DVD: What did you think of the original movie?**

Bonham Carter: Ours is certainly not a remake, there's a different attitude to the whole thing, I think. And I think we're certainly more ape-like.

**What DVD: So you were Tim's first choice for Ari ...**

Bonham Carter: Yeah, it's nice, isn't it? I had a first call from the agent asking if I'd ever consider playing a chimp. Then Tim called and said that I was the first person he'd thought of. So I said "absolutely." Of course, during the first make-up session I was thinking "This is insane"

**What DVD: What was it like?**

Bonham Carter: Well, you get used to it, psychologically and physically, but when I first put it on I was exhausted. You have your head cast first. And some people don't even get past that part. And it's usually all the big hunky men - they just crack up and go berserk. You're buried alive for 15 minutes, so you just have to trust the people.

**What DVD: How was Tim Burton?**

Bonham Carter: Well, he's very expressive. He's a little bit of an ape himself; he's all limbs and hair and has all this mad energy, and it's all intuition. Sometimes he'll not say a thing but you realise exactly what he needs.

**What DVD: What was shooting this movie like compared to your other films?**

Bonham Carter: Well, it was pretty different, but not so much because of Tim but the make-up and the whole culture of the film because it was a make-up film. It was all very strange, I mean Tim Roth walking around with all this make-up on at 7 o'clock in the morning. We were all very grumpy a lot of the time.

**What DVD: A lot of the apes could be over the top, but not Ari ...**

Bonham Carter: Yeah! They all had to concede that I had easily the hardest part, because I had to be a romantic lead and earnest too as a chimp! Tim Roth could be evil and campy and Paul had all the funny lines anyway, but I had to be romantic and a chimp.

**What DVD: Did you have to ham it up a bit?**

Bonham Carter: Well, it was hard. I mean, without being unkind about the script, it wasn't Shakespeare, so you had to really commit yourself. So you end up just looking in people's eyes all the time; it was difficult for Mark but he managed to look at me with such love!

**What DVD: As a 'serious actor' did you ever have a "What am I doing?" kind of moment?**

Bonham Carter: All the time. God yeah, it was perpetual self doubt. So I kept telling myself "Tim is God, Tim is God."

**What DVD: Did you have any preconceptions about Mark Wahlberg?**

Bonham Carter: Well, I did wonder what we going to talk about, because there's not exactly a lot of common ground. But he's really professional and down to earth.

**What DVD: Tim tells us he's a dog, Estella fancies herself as a horse. What kind of animal are you?**

Bonham Carter: I think I might be a dog too. But I mean it depends on what day it is. I think I must have been a bush baby, which is sort of boring, because I'm always asleep. Funny enough my nickname was monkey, as a kid.

**What DVD: Was it a tough movie in terms of having to get fit?**

Bonham Carter: I did lots of gym once and you have muscle memory and after a while it does all come back. But walking around in a semi-squat is quite tough.

**What DVD: Wasn't all that make-up a bit of a fire risk for a smoker?**

Bonham Carter: Rick [Baker] told me that there was a pretty good chance of going up in flames, so they gave me a long cigarette holder. I looked really glamorous.

**What DVD: The ending leaves room for a sequel - would you return to *Planet of the Apes*?**

Bonham Carter: Well, if it was with Tim and there was lots and lots and lots of money.

Jim Douglas